

**GUIDE FOR THE  
WRITING ACROSS THE CURRICULUM  
FACULTY SENATE COMMITTEE**

The Writing Across the Curriculum Program is supported by the Office of the Provost.



**Writing Across the Curriculum**

**George Mason University**

This guide offers faculty who sit on the Faculty Senate’s Writing Across the Curriculum (WAC) Committee a sense of the philosophy and goals that guide George Mason University’s WAC Program. We hope that it will also help to answer the common questions faculty may have and offer specific guidelines for participation on the WAC Committee and in fostering Mason’s “culture of writing.”

If you have any further questions, please contact Thomas Polk, Acting Director of the Writing Across the Curriculum Program, at [tpolk2@gmu.edu](mailto:tpolk2@gmu.edu).

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## **The Writing Across the Curriculum Committee Charge**

### *Committee Composition*

One elected representative from each of the academic units offering undergraduate degrees, the Director of the WAC Program who is an ex-officio member with no vote or possibility to chair the Committee.

### *Official Committee Charge*

To advise and work closely with the Director of Writing Across the Curriculum on current and projected activities and events, and to assist departments in the identification and definition of writing-intensive courses in their curricula.

To:

- A. Articulate and refine the requirements for the course designated to fulfill the WI requirement in every undergraduate degree across the university with the purpose of establishing homogeneous WI criteria;
- B. Assist colleges, schools and institutes in the identification of existing or new courses that degree programs propose to meet the WI requirement in their curricula;
- C. Review regularly the courses' WI-syllabi to determine compliance with the WI requirement;
- D. Suggest ways to meet the WI requirement for faculty teaching the WI designated courses; and
- E. Assist with activities and events related to writing across the curriculum.

### *Membership*

Representatives from each of Mason's colleges are recruited or self-identified during the summer months. Members are confirmed at the first Faculty Senate meeting of the new academic year.

### *Meeting Logistics*

#### *Meeting Schedule*

The WAC Committee meets 4 to 8 times annually. Members will be contacted via email to establish the meeting schedule for the academic year. We do ask that members respond quickly so that WAC Program staff can confirm times/dates of meetings for each semester and schedule the necessary rooms.

#### *Meeting Agendas*

The week before the meeting, the WAC Committee Chair will send an email to all members of the Committee to share topics of discussion and to request additional agenda items. Syllabi or other materials that require discussion or a vote will be circulated via email prior to the meeting. We ask members to bring a tablet/laptop with them to the meeting to access these documents. It is helpful for members to read materials ahead of time in order to expedite discussions and voting.

#### *Meeting Structure*

During meetings, we follow loose parliamentary procedure. All votes (e.g. approval of WI courses or amendment of the WI course criteria) require a quorum.

The Committee meetings are run by the Chair of the Committee, who is responsible for moving the Committee through the agenda and soliciting votes on syllabi or other actions.

Generally, meetings begin with the introductions of attendees and a short discussion of writing-related matters. The agenda then moves to the most pressing topic for discussion, which typically includes the approval and review of WI courses. Any other speakers or discussions are scheduled for the end of the meeting.

Past speakers have included Associate Provost for Graduate Education, Cody Edwards; Associate Provost for Undergraduate Education, Bethany Usher; and others.

## **Roles and Responsibilities of WAC Committee Members**

### *Committee Member Responsibilities*

- We ask that all members make a good faith effort to attend all meetings.
- Please let the Chair of the WAC Committee and the WAC Director know when/if you cannot attend a regularly scheduled meeting.
  - If you cannot attend a meeting that will entail the review of a WI course proposal, please review any WI course syllabi in advance of the meeting and submit your feedback to the WAC director via email so that your voice may be included in the discussion of the course.
- Please help us share information about events and initiatives related to writing and WI courses at Mason by forwarding email and/or communicating with your departmental colleagues about committee decisions and discussions.
- Any Committee Member who would like to suggest an agenda item may send it to the Committee Chair and WAC Director so that these ideas may be included on the agenda of the next meeting.

### *Advocating for Writing*

Part of being a representative on the WAC Committee means being an advocate for writing in your college and across the university's programs, departments, and sites of instruction. We ask that you come to WAC Committee meetings prepared to discuss what's going on with writing in your school or college, and consider what you might bring back to your faculty members from our meetings.

## **Roles and Responsibilities of WAC Program Staff**

From the Faculty Senate WAC Committee Charge: “The Director of the WAC Program . . . is an ex-officio member with no vote or possibility to chair the Committee.”

### *The WAC Program Director:*

- Consults with faculty and departments who are proposing new or changing existing WI courses in the majors.
- Collects and distributes course proposal materials for all WI courses that will undergo Committee review.
- Provides the Committee’s feedback to faculty and departments, requesting changes if necessary or continuing to workshop syllabi to meet the WI Course Criteria.
- May lead working groups of Committee Members on small-scale projects.
- Coordinates the collection of WI Course Syllabi and other instructional artifacts to review and evaluate WI Courses.

### *The WAC Program staff:*

- Assist Committee Members in finding meeting times that allow the most Committee Members to meet consistently during the semester.
- Support the Committee in developing meeting agenda and Committee priorities.
- Reserve meeting rooms and provide technological support for meetings.
- Provide access to materials for consideration.
- Circulate communications (agenda, supplemental materials, and meeting minutes) as necessary.
- Keep a Master List of all approved WI Courses in coordination with the Office of the Registrar, the Mason Core Committee, and the Provost’s Office.
- Make the WI Course Criteria available to the Mason community at large.

## **WAC Committee Activities**

What does the WAC Committee do? This section offers a general overview of the Committee's typical activities and processes.

### *Reviewing/Approving WI Courses*

The WAC Committee oversees the “writing intensive course” approval process, ensuring that all proposed courses meet the requirements for the “WI” designation, as well as encouraging a strong culture of writing in the disciplines. The committee also regularly reviews standing WI Course materials to certify that designated WI courses are continuing to meet the requirements. See full statement on “WI Course Recertification” in the appendix.

Each college has a representative on the WAC Committee, which ensures that all departments are represented in the decision-making process. The Committee's many consultants are experts in teaching writing and faculty development. They do not have voting power but offer vital perspective and insights into the design of courses and assignments.

### **WI Course Approval Process**

When applying for the WI designation, departments are encouraged to begin the process with a conversation about the department's goals for its student writers and the role and location of the WI course. Members are encouraged to participate in these conversations and might guide colleagues who are proposing a new course to consider the following questions:

- What does ‘good writing’ in our discipline look like?
- What, how, and why does a professional in our discipline write?
- What should the students in our program be able to accomplish as writers upon graduation?
- How will we know that students can accomplish these goals?
- What courses in the major program at all levels (100-400) feature rich writing experiences that develop their capacities to achieve these goals?
- How do these writing-enriched courses complement and build on each other?
- How might these courses work in sequence?
- How will the WI course we wish to develop contribute to our department's goals and complement other writing-enriched courses in our program?

After considering these questions, the process for developing a WI course typically follows these steps:

- Articulate the purpose, goals, and curricular location of the course
- Develop the course design and materials, including the syllabus, schedule, and assignments
- Draft, assemble, and submit the WI application materials through CourseLeaf

The application asks departments to discuss how the course will satisfy the WI criteria and learning outcomes. Departments are then required to submit their application



through CourseLeaf for the Committee to consider. The application should include the following materials:

- An overview narrative memo that describes the explicit writing instruction that takes place in the course and explains how the course and instruction satisfy both the WI criteria and the targeted WI learning outcomes chosen for the course;
- A syllabus, with WI syllabus statement, WI course criteria, and targeted WI learning outcomes articulated explicitly on it;
- A course schedule with writing instruction and writing assignments highlighted; and
- Descriptions/instructions for the major writing projects (instructions for low stakes writing tasks are also appreciated).

The WAC Director will review submitted materials and suggest possible revisions in advance of the WAC Committee's review and discussion of the course. Following any necessary revisions, the course will be discussed at the next scheduled WAC Committee meeting.

When reviewing a course application, WAC Committee members should ensure that the basic WI course criteria are satisfied. Additionally, members should pay particular attention to the WI learning outcomes and how they are supported by the instruction and assessed through the writing assignments. Some basic questions that members might typically ask when reviewing a course include:

- What are the learning outcomes?
- How will the assessments (writing assignments) help faculty to know students have met the outcomes?
- How does the instruction develop students' ability to meet the outcomes?

Members should use all documents attached to the application when considering these questions.

In addition to approving new courses, the Committee regularly reviews WI course materials to certify that designated WI courses are continuing to meet the requirements. See "WI Course Recertification" in the appendix for details.

### **Voting on WI Courses**

A quorum of voting members must vote on each WI course. As such, it is important that Committee Members review any WI course materials needing approval in advance of regularly scheduled WAC meetings, so that the application may be discussed in depth during the committee meeting.

When voting on course applications, Committee members have three options: approve, provisionally approve (with minor revisions), require further revision.

Should an application be returned to a department for further revision, the Committee must be prepared to offer feedback on the application and to review the revisions once returned to the Committee for consideration.

### *Writing-Intensive Courses and Writing-Enriched Courses*

Many faculty include writing assignments in their courses across the curriculum. In fact, a recent review of Mason Core syllabi revealed that 77% of them indicated some type of writing assignment. These “writing-enriched” courses provide opportunities to reinforce and extend the learning explicitly targeted in composition and writing-intensive courses. Departments should consider threading sequences of writing experiences that foster the gradual development of disciplinary writing competencies.

However, not all courses that meet the requirements above have gone through the WI approval process with the Senate Committee. Therefore, it is important that Senators communicate that in order for students to receive credit for completing their “WI” requirement, they must take the approved WI course or courses for their major. You can direct students or faculty to the Mason Course Catalog (see: <https://catalog.gmu.edu/mason-core/#wi>), which maintains a list of WI courses.

## **Writing-Intensive Courses**

### **Goals of the WI Course**

- To facilitate students learning disciplinary ways of writing, which are integrally connected with disciplinary ways of knowing and ways of doing;
- To increase student engagement around learning (since teaching writing across disciplines is recognized as a high-impact teaching practices);
- To make explicit the tacit communication practices expected of professionals in a particular discipline.

### **Criteria for the WI Course**

#### **Section size is limited to 35.**

However, the WAC Committee strongly encourages departments to set enrollments at 25 or lower. Lower student enrollments enable both instructors and students to meet WI goals successfully.

#### **Faculty will devote significant time to instruction on writing in the course and on how to complete assignments successfully.**

Detailed written assignments with explicit learning goals and evaluative criteria are strongly encouraged as part of this instruction. Expectations should be communicated for all types of writing, including writing in digital spaces, as appropriate to the assignment. For example, expectations for a blog or discussion post may vary depending on the purpose for the assignment and the discipline, and these distinctions and expectations should be made explicit.

**Students are required to revise at least one substantive assignment in the course based on instructor feedback.**

In courses in which students complete multiple short assignments of a similar nature (e.g., mathematical proofs) revision need not be required. However, instructor feedback should still be given so that students have the opportunity to improve. If the only assignment in the course is not due until the end of the course, it should be divided into sequenced sections that receive feedback and can be revised.

**Students will receive instructor feedback on their writing.**

Feedback should focus on how meaning is made in the discipline, including organizational strategies, written forms and conventions, appropriate evidence and source use, etc. The types of writing and the grade value assigned to them will vary according to the discipline and the assignment. *Note:* While peer feedback can also be a valuable part of the process, it does not replace instructor expertise.

**All of the writing assignments in the course should count substantially toward students' final grades in the course. To this end, students should be asked to write a minimum of 3500 words, divided among two or more assignments.**

Writing that specifically addresses and is graded on how well students address the content, intended audience, and rhetorical purposes can count towards the minimum word requirement.

**WI Courses must be offered and taken in the major.**

Departments are encouraged to develop WI Courses within the major as part of the core curriculum offered. In rare circumstances, a new and/or developing program may need to seek a temporary arrangement with a different department or unit to provide WI course credit to students. In this case, please contact the Director of the WAC Program to discuss the application and approval process.

**WI Courses must carry 3-credits.**

Departments may meet this requirement via a single course or a series of courses or according to the degree plan. In some instances this requirement will be waived. (Departments seeking to waive this requirement must demonstrate how students are asked to meet all other requirements of a WI course and speak to issues of faculty workload.)

**Learning Outcomes of the WI Course**

WI courses should engage both *writing-to-learn* and *writing-to-communicate* and teach writing as a process (not just a product) by addressing the following foundational learning outcomes. All WI courses should explicitly meet the writing as a process outcome and at least one outcome from each of the other categories (writing to learn and writing to communicate).

*Writing to learn: using writing as a form of inquiry, invention, and reflection*

- Students will use writing to explore and respond to texts or other content in ways that deepen their awareness of the discipline and its subject matter.

- Students will write in response to secondary sources in their disciplines in order to better understand, analyze, and synthesize key questions and conversations reflected in those sources and their disciplines.
- Students will use writing to reflect on the strategies, processes, genres, purposes, and audiences that they, their peers, or professionals in their disciplines engage as writers as students continue to build on and adapt their prior experiences to new and changing contexts for writing.

*Writing to communicate: using writing as a form of participation in a discipline*

- Students will gain familiarity with one or more disciplinary genres and be able to explain some of the major conventions for composing the genre(s), including (but not limited to) purpose, audience, structure, content, language use, and citation practices.
- Students will demonstrate through writing assignments a rhetorical awareness of the decisions they make related to purpose, audience, and the context of the discipline in which they write, including writing conventions that are specific to their field.

*Writing as a process*

- Students will develop strategies appropriate to the discipline and genre for revising, reorganizing, and proofreading writing based upon feedback they receive as they engage in a recursive writing process.

## Description of the Writing Across the Curriculum Program

Although Mason's WAC Program has existed in some form since 1978 when the first workshop on teaching with writing were offered, the WAC Program was officially started in 1993 by Dr. Christopher Thaiss and Dr. Stanley Zoltek when the first WI Courses were approved by the Faculty Senate. Mason's WAC Program has been recognized as an international model for writing in the disciplines.

### *WAC Mission*

The WAC Program at George Mason University holds as a core belief that, at heart, all campuses are communities of writers. Course assignments, grant proposals, research articles, social media posts, and annual review portfolios: Mason's faculty, staff, and students are frequently writing. The WAC program upholds this campus-wide "culture of writing" via a commitment to student writers, faculty writers, and writing-rich coursework across all disciplines.

### *WAC Goals*

Our core mission informs the projects we undertake with our cross-campus [network of partners](#). Our integrated, project-based approach aims to accomplish the following goals:

- Promote writing as a tool for learning and critical thinking
- Support the teaching of writing across the curriculum
- Advise departments on writing curriculum and faculty development
- Research and assess writing and teaching with writing in the disciplines
- Support faculty writing and research productivity and well-being

### *WAC Principles and Practices*

Our WAC program is guided by the [INWAC Statement of WAC Principles and Practices](#). In particular, WAC Mason recognizes that:

- Writing is an important tool for learning and discovery as well as for conveying what has been learned and discovered.
- Students gain proficiency as writers when they have frequent opportunities to write in courses across the curriculum, addressing a range of audiences and practicing the genres typical of their majors and the workplaces they will enter.
- Faculty across the curriculum share responsibility for helping students learn the conventions and rhetorical practices of their disciplines.
- Students benefit from having opportunities to revise based on meaningful feedback from their teachers, that is, feedback that teaches and provides direction rather than focusing solely on error.
- Writing instruction must be continuous throughout students' undergraduate and graduate education.

### *WAC's Main Project Areas*

WAC Program projects fall into three general categories: assessment and research, policy and guidance, and faculty and curriculum development. Our assessment and research projects seek to better understand Mason's culture of writing. The findings of that research and assessment work

informs our policy and faculty / curriculum development work and helps to give shape to our campus' culture of writing. Some more details about these categories are below:

### **Direct Faculty Pedagogical Development**

Good teaching practices are reinforced through faculty development workshops, departmental assessment workshops, consultation with faculty and departments, and collaboration with other teaching-focused units across the university. Workshops on designing high impact writing assignments, using writing to support content learning, and providing feedback to support student revision are regularly offered by WAC Program staff; workshops can also be requested by departments and programs. Faculty Learning Communities are regularly offered as well; recent communities focused on Teaching Research Writing and Teaching with Writing.

### **Indirect Faculty Pedagogical Development**

Additionally, WAC staff develop a number of teaching guides and other resources on teaching with writing that are shared through [the program website](#), newsletter, and other channels.

### **Faculty Writing Development**

WAC supports faculty writing and research through Friday writing sprints, panels lead by faculty across the curriculum, and faculty writing retreats each winter and summer.

### **Assessment, Research, and Review**

WAC staff regularly undertake research and assessment projects to better understand and describe Mason's culture of writing. Some of these projects take on a university-wide lens, like supporting the recent SACS assessment of upper-level writing or interviewing seniors about their experiences with writing across the curriculum. Other projects take a narrower lens, such as the experiences of faculty-librarian partnerships in WI courses. We frequently report on these projects and publish those results in national journals, conferences, and on [our website](#).

The WAC program also regularly collects and reviews materials from WI courses to facilitate the Committee's review of the WI requirement. The most recent review was conducted in spring 2019; all course review reports can be found on the WAC website, [here](#).

### *WAC's Institutional Location*

WAC is currently affiliated with the Stearns Center for Teaching and Learning. The current Acting Director, Thomas Polk, reports to Dr. Shelley Reid, Director of the Stearns Center.

Our offices are physically located in Innovation Hall.

## Appendix

### *WI Course Recertification*

The Writing Across the Curriculum (WAC) Committee is charged with overseeing the writing-intensive (WI) requirements in the major, including regularly reviewing WI course syllabi to certify that designated WI courses are continuing to meet the requirements.

In keeping with this charge and with the goal of clarifying the review and re-certification process for designated WI courses, the WAC Committee will:

1. Monitor enrollments in WI courses every semester to determine that sections of the course meet the 35-student cap. In the event that the enrollment exceeds 35, the department will be notified. After such notification, if the course continues to exceed the 35-student cap in successive semesters, the department will be notified that the WI designation has been removed and the course will not appear in the catalog as meeting the WI requirement.

Note that in situations where departments have received past approval from the WAC Committee to exceed course caps, the department is responsible for providing evidence of this approval and for any other alternate arrangements for meeting the WI requirements, e.g. recitation sections focused on writing. In such instances, all of the WI requirements around writing instruction, number of written words, and feedback on and revision of assignments must be present.

2. Collect and review materials from WI courses on a rotating basis to certify that the WI criteria are present. In addition to the 35-student enrollment cap for course sections described above, the removal of WI certification will be based upon the absence of one or more of the following criteria:

- **Writing Intensive Statement:** A statement on the syllabus should describe WI courses and their criteria.
- **Writing Assignments:** Students should be asked to write a minimum of 3500 words, divided among two or more assignments.
- **Revision Based on Faculty Feedback:** Students are required to revise at least one substantive assignment in the course based on instructor feedback.

Departments will be notified well in advance when they are expected to send materials to the WAC Committee for review. If a course is determined to no longer meet the requirements for serving as a WI course, the department and faculty member will be alerted and provided with recommendations for bringing the course back into alignment.

Departments may at that time choose to drop the WI status if they have other courses that better satisfy the requirement. If the department wishes to keep the WI certification, it must demonstrate that the course has been revised to come back into alignment. In the event that any courses reviewed do not meet the requirements upon re-review, the WI designation will be removed from those courses.

In cases where there are many sections of a given WI course, the same process will be followed as above; however, if more than 1/3rd of sections are found to be out of alignment with the requirements, the department will receive a warning and will have one academic year to correct the problems (demonstrated through re-review the following year) or the department can choose to give up the WI designation. In the event that the courses reviewed do not meet the requirements upon re-review, the WI designation will be removed from that course.

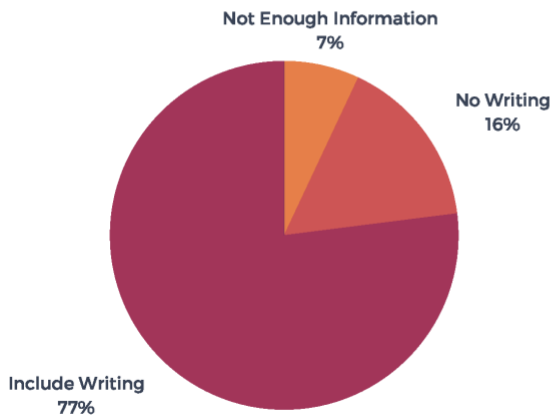
In the event that a department does not submit materials for review after three notifications, the WI designation will be removed from that course.



# Writing in Mason Core

## HOW MUCH WRITING DO FACULTY ASSIGN IN GENERAL EDUCATION COURSES AT MASON?

Thomas Polk, Acting Director, Writing Across the Curriculum  
Data compiled by John Walter, Graduate Assistant Director



Percentage of syllabi assigning writing

### 399 OF 518 (77%) SYLLABI ASSIGN WRITING PROJECTS

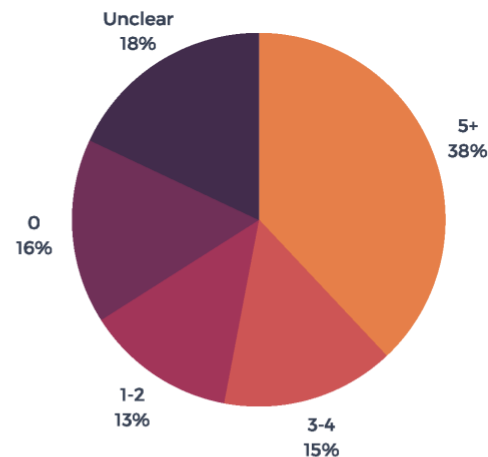
364 of the 518 syllabi (70%) include significant amounts of writing, accounting for at least 10% of the final grade. 35 syllabi (7%) include some minor writing assignments, and 83 syllabi (16%) do not assign writing. The remaining 36 syllabi (7%) do not include information about assignments.

### 198 OF 518 (38%) ASSIGN 5 OR MORE WRITING PROJECTS

A majority of syllabi (53%) assign at least 3 writing projects during the semester, including 1 or more high stakes assignment.

### 198 OF 518 (38%) INTEGRATE WRITING THROUGH AT LEAST 7 WEEKS OF THE SEMESTER

39 syllabi (8%) integrate writing for 4-6 weeks; 36 syllabi (7%) integrate writing for 1-3 weeks. The remaining 47% do not include enough scheduling information.



Number of writing projects included on syllabi

This report does not include courses fulfilling the Written Communication requirement (ENGH 101, ENGH 302 & writing-intensive courses). Natural Sciences and Oral Communication courses have not yet been reviewed; these numbers will be updated after their review.

While syllabi contain important information regarding the amount and kinds of writing assigned in these courses, most syllabi are not comprehensive enough to provide a complete account. For example, a syllabus might indicate 10 discussion forum posts of 250-words representing 10% of the course grade but provide no information regarding the number and length of the "papers" that account for 40% of the course grade.

## WRITING IN GENERAL EDUCATION COURSES

### Writing in Core Categories

47 of 49 (96%) of **Capstone** syllabi include writing assignments.

69 of 72 (96%) of **World History and Global Understanding** syllabi include writing.

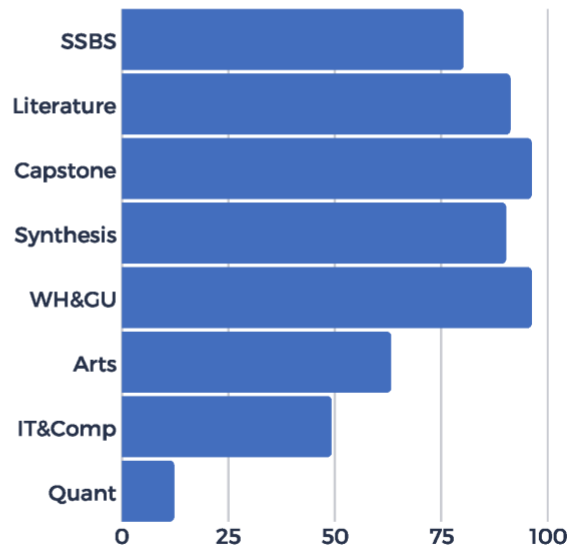
54 of 60 (90%) of **Synthesis** syllabi include writing.

### Characteristics of Writing Assignments

92% of syllabi that assign writing use **high stakes** writing projects.

49% of syllabi that assign writing use **low stakes** writing projects.

30% of syllabi **scaffold assignments** across multiple steps.



Percentages of syllabi including writing by Core category

## A WRITING-ENRICHED CURRICULUM

Writing-intensive courses have been identified as a **high-impact educational practice**, but writing is frequently assigned in other courses to assess student learning. Research demonstrates that writing assignments enhance student engagement and promote critical thinking, but the quality of the assignment design, including interactions with more advanced writers, matters more than the amount of writing assigned. Furthermore, **writers develop gradually through continuous, varied, and deliberate practice across contexts**.

Faculty in Mason's Core curriculum assign frequent and varied writing projects, but the infrequent use of low stakes writing and scaffolded assignments suggests that students might benefit more from these writing experiences. Composition and Writing-intensive courses provide foundational learning experiences, and **writing-enriched general education courses can reinforce and extend the learning** students acquire.

To further integrate writing into the Core curriculum, courses can:

- Develop a **writing outcome** that recognizes the writing already present in the course and articulates the purposes for teaching with writing
- Adopt **writing process pedagogies** that provide students the opportunity to develop projects over multiple steps and revise writing based on faculty feedback

## Key Terms in WAC

Below are a variety of terms you may hear during the course of WAC Committee meetings. This glossary was developed from the WAC Program at Appalachian State University.

(<http://wac.appstate.edu/writing-disciplines/wac-glossary-terms>)

**WAC, or WRITING ACROSS THE CURRICULUM** is a writing instruction program that pervades the entire college curriculum where interdisciplinary approaches use writing to learn and to communicate in general education as well as major courses of study.

**WID, or WRITING IN THE DISCIPLINES** refers to the writing done in a student's chosen field of study.

A **GENRE** is a mode of discourse suitable for a specific purpose or field. Each academic discipline has its own manner of expression, vocabulary, formats, and habits of thought so that anyone intending to communicate in that field must be familiar with and be able to join in its expression. Michael Carter of North Carolina State says in "Ways of Knowing, Doing, and Writing in the Disciplines,"

Miller, Bazerman, and Russell ... define genre as social action, ways of doing and writing by which individual linguistic acts on the microlevel constitute social formations on the macrolevel.... [T]hey establish the concept of genre set as a collection of related genres .... [and] use the genre set to indicate the role that related genres play in constituting complex social formations. (393)

(See **METAGENRE** below.)

**INFORMATION LITERACY:** Information literate students can recognize an information need, find, select, locate and evaluate the information they need, and incorporate what they discover competently and responsibly in any field. Information literate students should be able to demonstrate competencies in formulating research questions and in their ability to use information.

**METAGENRE** is defined by Michael Carter of NC State as "a higher category, a genre of genres." He adds, "[A] metagenre indicates a structure of similar ways of doing that point to similar ways of writing and knowing" (393). Carter's four metagenres (or ways of doing) are

- (1) **Problem Solving** (defining a problem and creating a solution such as in business, marketing and management plans, project reports or proposals, and technical and feasibility reports);
- (2) **Empirical Inquiry** (drawing conclusions based on investigation of empirical data as in laboratory or research reports, research proposals, scientific articles and presentations);
- (3) **Research from Sources** (data from secondary sources intrinsic to a discipline such as History or English); and
- (4) **Performance** (knowing as doing, performance and its artifacts such as drawings, sculptures, paintings, films, news stories and editorials, websites, Power Point presentations, technical reports, theatre and dance exhibitions).

**TRANSFERABLE SKILLS** is the term for the adaptation of one skill set in a particular context to a different context. The “soft” transfers entail contexts that are similar, while the “hard” transfers depend on deliberate abstraction from one context to another. An example of a soft transfer would occur when a student new to History creates a References page in APA format, using the skills previously learned for creating a Works Cited page in MLA format; a hard transfer occurs when a student uses the skills learned when writing a literacy narrative to write a historiography essay.

A **VERTICAL CURRICULUM** refers to a coordinated and progressive laddering of skills where early attempts build to emerging or advanced mastery toward expert and professional mastery.

In a Vertical Curricular Model, students take multiple writing courses during the years of their undergraduate experience with increasing introduction to and specialization in their chosen fields.

- **English 101** is a freshman-level course that explores expository writing, research, and critical thinking.
- **English 302, Advanced Composition**, builds on the general college-level writing skills and strategies students have acquired in earlier courses. It prepares them to do advanced-level analysis and writing specifically within their major field and their possible future workplaces.
- **Writing Intensive**, which is at least one upper-division course in each major, has been designated as fulfilling the university’s Mason Core “writing intensive” (WI) requirement. These courses are meant to instruct students on writing in the major and are taught by disciplinary faculty.

Please note: Writing Across the Curriculum does not administer English 101 or English 302. The WAC Program does not oversee the Writing Center. WAC is a Provost’s Office initiative that facilitates upper-level writing-intensive courses and supports faculty development in teaching writing in the disciplines.